



Virgil Gamache Farms, Inc.

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Docket Clerk
AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Market Order Administration Branch
USDA Mail Stop 0237
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0201

January 3, 2003

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a U.S. Hop Grower, and after three years of industry discussion have come to the conclusion that the proposed marketing order is a crucial tool to bring stability to our industry. My family has been involved in the hop industry since the late 1800's. Since that time there hasn't been an event (other than Prohibition) that has eroded both equity and human resource as quickly and ferociously as the latest round of hop overproduction. These poor economic conditions have persevered for arguably the last ten years. Which is quite contrary to most ag-economist's arguments for a "normal" 5-year cycle. To say the least, I am very concerned that our industry will continue to shrink to a point where it is no longer a contributor in any meaningful way to the brewing industry, and to our national and local economies. This constant erosion must end, and the quickest, least painful way to accomplish this task, is through federal involvement. I encourage the Department to allow public hearings and a referendum on the marketing order to happen as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Bernard J. Gamache